



BLUES PIANO **FOR BEGINNERS**

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[Introduction](#)

Welcome to Blues Piano For Beginners. This book will start you on the road to playing authentic blues piano, even if you are a complete beginner. You'll get started right away by learning some essential left-hand and right-hand patterns to use on your first (or next) blues piano gig!

Please email us at books@harrisonmusic.com with "Beginning Blues Audio" in the subject, to receive your FREE mp3 audio recordings of all the music examples in this book! Most of the audio recordings feature a rhythm section on the left channel, and the piano on the right channel. To play along with the band, turn down the right channel to eliminate the recorded piano. To hear the piano part for reference, turn down the left channel to eliminate the rhythm section.

Some eReaders will display the music notation in this book more clearly than others, so along with your free mp3s you will also receive pdf versions of all the music notation examples, as a backup for your use if needed.

Section One - The Basic Blues Left Hand Pattern

The foundation of a great blues piano performance is the strong and steady left hand pattern. Our first blues piano left hand pattern uses fifth and sixth intervals and a “swing eighths” rhythmic feel, as follows:

Example 1



Here in the bass clef, C and G are played together during beats 1 and 3 of each measure, and C and A are played together during beats 2 and 4 of each measure. Be sure to check out the mp3 audio track for this example (especially if your note reading is at a beginning level!) Also the fingering numbers are shown on the staff: the pinky is playing the C, and the index finger and thumb are playing the G and A respectively. The “fingering simile” note in the second measure, means that the fingering is the same as for the first measure.

The eighth-note rhythmic counting (1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &) is shown above the staff. This is how eighth notes are counted, with the 1, 2, 3 and 4 falling on the downbeats, and the “&s” in between falling on the upbeats. In this swing eighths example, all of the “&s” actually land two-thirds of the way through each beat, giving the rhythm a more “loping” or shuffle type of feel. Count along to the mp3 audio track accompanying this example, to get comfortable with this rhythmic idea. All of the music examples in this book have a swing eighths feel, which is very common and traditional in piano blues.

This left hand pattern will work on a C major or C dominant 7th chord in a blues song (moving between the root-5th and root-6th of the chord).

Section Two - Adding Triads in the Right Hand

In the next example we've added a simple C major triad (three-note chord) in the right hand, over the previous pattern in the left hand:

Example 2

The image shows a musical score for Example 2. It consists of two staves. The top staff is in treble clef, 4/4 time, and contains a C major triad (C4, E4, G4) played as whole notes. Above the staff is a chord symbol 'C'. The bottom staff is in bass clef, 4/4 time, and contains a bass line with eighth notes. The notes are: C3, E3, G3, A3, B3, C4, D4, E4, F4, G4, A4, B4, C5. The first two measures of the bass line have a '5' below the first note, and the last two measures have a '5' below the first note. The text '(FINGERING SIMILE)' is written below the bass line in the second measure.

Note that the left hand pattern and fingering are the same as for Example 1. Above this in the right hand, we have the C major triad played as whole notes (which last for four beats each). The right hand fingering is also shown, with the thumb, middle finger and pinky playing the notes C, E and G respectively.

As you play this example, focus on getting the left hand pattern steady and consistent, with the right hand triads landing on beat 1 of each measure. You can count through it in a similar way to Example 1 (1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &) if needed. Again if you are unsure about how this example sounds, check out the accompanying mp3 audio track. Then when you're ready, play along to the rhythm section track on the left channel!

Theory note: The C major triad is built by taking the first, third, and fifth degrees of a C major scale. The third of the chord (E) is a major third interval above the root, and the fifth of the chord (G) is a perfect fifth interval above the root. The chord symbol above the staff (C) denotes a C major triad.

Section Three - The Twelve-Bar Blues Progression

Next we need to develop this blues “comping” or accompaniment idea, over a blues chord progression. A simple blues progression can be created using I, IV and V chords within a key (this is equivalent to building chords from the first, fourth and fifth degrees of a major scale). First we’ll need to review a little bit of theory to see where these chords come from:

Example 3



In this example, the “empty noteheads” spell out a C major scale (C-D-E-F-G-A-B-C from left to right). Above the first, fourth and fifth degrees (C, F and G) we have built C major, F major and G major triads respectively.

Theory note: The C major scale (like all major scales) is spelled using whole-step, whole-step, half-step, whole-step, whole-step, whole-step, and half-step intervals in an ascending sequence. These C, F and G major triads are all “diatonic to” the key of C, meaning they are all contained within the C major scale.

In the next example we’ll see how these C, F and G major triads can be used on a twelve-bar blues progression in the key of C:

Example 4

This progression contains twelve bars or measures, and is the standard form used for a great many blues songs! This basic twelve-bar form consists of three four-measure sections, which start with the I chord (C), the IV chord (F), and the V chord (G) respectively.

Note the piano pattern used is the same as for Example 2, with the right hand playing whole-note triads, and the left hand playing root-fifth and root-sixth intervals on all of the eighth note subdivisions. Make sure that you “look ahead” for the hand position changes needed (for example, the left hand pinky jumping down to F in measure 2) - this will help you play the pattern in tempo, rather than “pausing” at the point of chord change to figure out where to go!

Again when you’re ready, play along with the rhythm section on the left channel of the audio track, to get comfortable with this classic blues progression.

Section Four - Using Triad Inversions

So far, all of our right hand triads have been in “root position”, meaning that the root is on the bottom of each triad (i.e. C is the bottom note of the C major triad, F is the bottom note of the F major triad, and so on). Next we’ll start using some triad inversions, where the root is no longer the bottom note in the right hand. This will give us lots of useful ways to move from one chord to another!

First of all we’ll use triad inversions to give us some movement and variation within the C major chord we started out with:

Example 5

The image shows a musical score for a piano exercise. It is in 4/4 time and consists of two measures. The left hand (bass clef) plays a steady eighth-note bass line: C2, E2, G2, C3, E3, G3, C4, E4, G4, C5, E5, G5, C6, E6, G6, C7, E7, G7, C8. The right hand (treble clef) plays a sequence of chords: C major (root position) in measure 1, and F major (second inversion) in measure 2. The F major chord is inverted so that the fifth (C) is the lowest note. The exercise is marked with a 'c' and includes the instruction '(FINGERING SIMILE)'. The fingering for the right hand is shown as 1-2-3 for the C major triad and 3-2-1 for the F major triad.

In comparing this to Example 2, we see that the left hand pattern is the same, and the right hand still starts with a root position C major triad in each measure. However, during beat 2 of each measure we are moving to an F major triad and then back to the C major triad in the right hand. The F major triad on beat 2 has been inverted, so that the fifth of the chord (C) is on the bottom – this is called “second inversion”. Using this inversion of the F major triad enables us to move more smoothly between this chord and the adjacent C major triads in root position. This smooth movement between chord inversions is referred to as “voice leading”.

This is the first example with rhythmic subdivisions in both hands, so you may need to practice this hands separately before combining the hands together. The key to playing great blues piano is to get the left hand pattern on auto-pilot as much as possible, so make sure the left hand is secure before adding the right hand part. Use the right hand fingering as shown, and you’ll soon be comfortable with this new chord movement using triad inversions.

Relating back to the rhythmic counting shown in Example 1, note that the F

major triad falls on beat 2, with the following C major triad falling on the “& of 2” or part-way through beat 2, and then held through beat 3. This type of rhythmic “anticipation” is very common across a range of blues, pop and rock styles - again check out the accompanying mp3 audio track to get familiar with this concept.

Theory note: Although we are playing the F major triad briefly on beat 2 before returning to the C major triad, we are not showing an F major chord symbol above the staff. The F major triad is heard as a harmonic embellishment or fill within the C major chord, and is not a “chord change” as such. With respect to the C major chord, we are moving “I - IV - I” (one to four and back to one again) within the chord. This is sometimes referred to as “backcycling” in blues and gospel circles.

Next we’ll apply this new right hand chord movement to the twelve-bar chord progression from Example 4:

Example 6

The musical score for Example 6 is a 12-bar blues progression in 4/4 time, written in grand staff notation. The progression is divided into three systems of four bars each. The first system starts with a C major chord (C) in the first bar, followed by an F major chord (F) in the second bar, and returns to C major in the third and fourth bars. The second system starts with an F major chord (F) in the first bar, followed by a C major chord (C) in the second bar, and returns to F major in the third and fourth bars. The third system starts with a G major chord (G) in the first bar, followed by an F major chord (F) in the second bar, and returns to C major in the third and fourth bars. The bass line is a steady eighth-note pattern. The right hand part features a rhythmic pattern of eighth notes and quarter notes, with a 'smile' (a half-note chord) on the second beat of each bar. A '(INGERING SMILE)' annotation is placed below the right hand part in the second bar of the first system.

Each measure using a C major chord, is the same as shown in Example 5. On the F major chords we are moving to a Bb major triad and back again, and on the G major chords we are moving to a C major triad and back again. These are “I - IV - I” (one to four and back to one again) movements within each chord respectively.

Again practice this example hands separately as needed to start with, and then play along with the band on the mp3 track when you're ready!

Note that, although we are using right hand triad inversions to voice lead within each measure, for simplicity we are still starting each measure with a root position triad, as we did back in Example 4. As a more advanced exercise, you can use triad inversions to voice lead more closely between measures, as well as within each measure – feel free to experiment!

Section Five - Working with Four-Part Chords

Next we'll look at further ways of expanding and moving within chords when playing the blues. You remember back in Example 3 we built major triads from the I, IV and V (C, F and G) within the key of C. Now we're going to build "dominant seventh" four-part chords from the I, IV and V, as follows:

Example 7



When we expand beyond triads (three-part chords) in the blues, we most commonly use "dominant seventh" four-part chords.

Theory note: Dominant 7th chords consist of major 3rd, perfect 5th and minor 7th intervals above the root. For example on the C7 chord, the 3rd of the chord (E) is a major 3rd interval above the root, the 5th of the chord (G) is a perfect 5th interval above the root, and the 7th of the chord (Bb) is a minor 7th interval above the root. The chord symbol above the staff (C7) denotes a C dominant 7th chord.

A great way to embellish within these dominant 7th chords in the blues, is to rhythmically alternate the upper part of the chord with the root in the right hand. Let's see how to do this on these C7, F7 and G7 chords:

Example 8



Let's look closely at this right hand example so we can understand what's happening! On the C7 chord in measure 1, we're playing the 5th and 7th (G and Bb) on beat 1. Then on beat 2 we're playing F and A which are "passing tones" on the chord (briefly implying an F major chord, similar to what we did in

Example 5). On beat 3 we're back "inside" the C7 chord, playing the 3rd and 5th (E and G). In between on the rhythmic "upbeats" (or "&s" in the rhythmic counting from Example 1) we're playing the note C in the thumb of the right hand. The same concepts are then being used on the F7 and G7 chords in this example.

Theory note: All of the notes in a C7 chord are found in a "C Mixolydian mode", which is equivalent to a C major scale with a flatted 7th degree (i.e. Bb instead of B). All of the third intervals (G-Bb, F-A, E-G) in the first measure are contained within C Mixolydian. Similarly, the notes in the second and third measure are all contained within F Mixolydian and G Mixolydian respectively.

Next we'll put these new right hand ideas to work over the whole twelve-bar blues progression used in earlier examples. To make things easier to start with, we'll just play the root of each chord as a whole note in the left hand:

Example 9

The musical notation for Example 9 consists of three systems of four bars each, representing a 12-bar blues progression in F major. The right hand plays a consistent eighth-note pattern across all bars. The left hand plays the root of the chord as a whole note. The chord changes are: C7 (measures 1-2), F7 (measures 3-4), C7 (measures 5-6), C7 (measures 7-8), F7 (measures 9-10), C7 (measures 11-12). A handwritten note "(RIGHT HAND FINGERING SMILE)" is present in the second measure of the first system.

You can start off by playing just the right hand pattern around the chord changes, then add the left hand root notes when you're ready. As usual, go ahead and use the accompanying mp3 audio for reference and to play along with the band!

Once you're comfortable with this example, we can combine the left hand pattern from Example 4, with this new right hand pattern on the twelve-bar blues

progression:
Example 10

The musical score for Example 10 is presented in three systems, each consisting of a treble and bass staff. The key signature has one flat (B-flat), and the time signature is 4/4. The progression of chords is as follows:

- System 1: C7, F7, C7. Includes the instruction "(FINGERING SIMILAR)".
- System 2: F7, C7.
- System 3: G7, F7, C7.

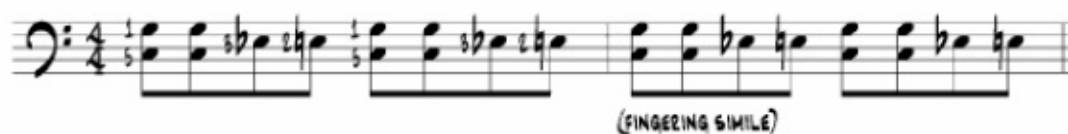
The bass line is a steady eighth-note pattern. The treble line features a bluesy melody with slurs and ties.

This would be a great groove to play on your first (or next) blues/rock gig. Again you can practice this example hands separately as needed. When you combine the hands, make sure the left hand part provides solid and steady support to the right hand part. Have fun playing along with the band on the mp3 audio track!

Section Six - Varying the Left Hand Pattern

Although the preceding left hand pattern is a good starting point, there are many different left hand patterns used in piano blues. Our next left hand pattern is in a “Chicago Blues” style and uses a half-step movement into the 3rd of the chord:

Example 11



Again make sure you play this with a “swing eighths” rhythmic subdivision (see comments after Example 1). Check out the mp3 audio track as needed, for the rhythmic feel of this example.

The left hand fingering now uses the pinky on the C and the thumb on the G, with the middle finger and index finger playing the Eb and E respectively. The E is the 3rd of the implied C or C7 chord, and the Eb is “resolving” into it by a half-step interval. This resolution normally occurs within beats 2 and/or 4 in each measure, and is a commonly-used left hand device from boogie-woogie through to blues/rock piano styles.

Next we’ll see how this new left hand pattern can be combined with a basic C major triad in the right hand, as follows:

Example 12



Note that the left hand pattern and fingering are the same as for Example 11. Above this in the right hand, we have the C major triad played as whole notes. As you play this example, focus on getting the left hand pattern steady and

consistent, with the right hand triads landing on beat 1 of each measure. Again you can count through it in a similar way to Example 1 (1 & 2 & 3 & 4 &) if needed.

In the next example we'll use this new left hand pattern together with C, F and G major triads in the right hand, over the complete twelve-bar blues progression in the key of C:

Example 13

The musical score for Example 13 is a 12-bar blues progression in C major, 4/4 time. It is presented in three systems, each with a treble and bass clef staff. The first system (measures 1-4) has chords C, F, and C. The second system (measures 5-8) has chords F and C. The third system (measures 9-12) has chords G, F, and C. The bass line consists of eighth-note patterns. A '(ENDING SMILE)' annotation is placed in the first measure of the second system.

For simplicity, this example uses the same right hand root position triads as in Example 4. However, you can use inversions to voice lead more closely between triads if desired.

Practice the left hand part separately as needed before adding the right hand triads on top. As before, try to “look ahead” for the hand position changes needed (for example, the left hand pinky jumping down to F in measure 2).

Section Seven - More Right and Left Hand Combinations

Next we will combine this new “Chicago Blues” left hand pattern with some of our earlier right hand patterns, over the complete twelve-bar blues progression in C.

First of all, here is the new left hand pattern combined with the “backcycled” right hand triad inversions used in Example 6:

Example 14

The musical notation for Example 14 is a 12-bar blues progression in C major, 4/4 time. It consists of three systems of two staves each (treble and bass clef). The right hand part features triad inversions: C major (C-E-G), F major (F-A-C), and G major (G-B-D). The left hand part features a 'Chicago Blues' pattern of eighth notes: C-B-A-G, F-E-D-C, and G-F-E-D. A '(FINGERING SMILE)' annotation is placed above the bass line in bar 2. Chord symbols C, F, and G are placed above the treble clef in bars 1, 5, and 9 respectively.

This is a fun and interesting groove to play as it combines melodic movements in both the right and left hand parts. As with previous examples, play this hands separately first as needed. Like all blues left hand patterns, getting this one on “auto-pilot” is recommended, to create a solid foundation below the right hand part.

Next we’ll combine this same left hand pattern with the right hand dominant chord pattern used in Example 10:

Example 15

The musical score consists of three systems of piano accompaniment. Each system has two staves: a treble clef staff for the right hand and a bass clef staff for the left hand. The key signature has one flat (Bb) and the time signature is 4/4. The first system contains two measures with a C7 chord, followed by two measures with an F7 chord, and a final measure with a C7 chord. The second system contains two measures with an F7 chord, followed by two measures with a C7 chord. The third system contains two measures with a G7 chord, followed by two measures with an F7 chord, and a final measure with a C7 chord. The right hand melody is primarily eighth and quarter notes, while the left hand accompaniment is a steady eighth-note pattern. A '(FINGERING SIMILE)' instruction is written above the first measure of the second system.

This combination of right and left hand patterns creates some interesting “tensions” which are very stylistic in the blues. Have fun jamming on this one with the accompanying mp3 audio track!

Section Eight - Improvising with the Tonic Blues Scale

Here the term “tonic blues scale” simply means the blues scale built from the tonic of the key. For example, if we are in the key of C, the “tonic blues scale” would be the C blues scale.

So far in this book, we have focused on patterns that can be used for blues “comping” or accompaniment. Now we’ll start learning how to play an improvised solo or melody over the blues progression. This is where knowing your blues scales will come in very handy! Here is a C blues scale, in ascending sequence:

Example 16



If you’re new to this scale, you may find the intervals rather unusual compared to the whole-step and half-step sequence found in major scales.

Theory note: There are a couple of ways to build blues scales using intervals. If we take intervals between successive notes in the scale, we get minor 3rd - whole step - half step - half step - minor 3rd - whole step (i.e. C up to Eb is a minor 3rd, Eb up to F is a whole step, F up to F# is a half step, and so on). Alternatively, if we take intervals between the tonic or starting note (C) and each of the other notes, we get minor 3rd - perfect 4th - augmented 4th - perfect 5th - minor 7th - octave (i.e. C up to Eb is a minor 3rd, C up to F is a perfect 4th, C up to F# is an augmented 4th, and so on).

The beauty of using the tonic blues scale when improvising (or creating a blues melody), is that we can stay within the scale for the whole twelve-bar blues progression. So even though we’ve been moving between C7, F7 and G7 chords in our blues progressions so far, we can use the C blues scale throughout. This can cause some vertical tensions and “contradictions” between the scale tones and the chords, however this is part of the essential character of the blues!

When constructing melody or solo phrases using the blues scale, it can be helpful to break down the twelve-bar form into three different four-measure sections. A good starting point is to simply repeat a four-measure blues scale phrase three times, to fit over the twelve-bar blues form. Here’s an example of

this principle at work, using the C blues scale in the right hand, accompanied by simple root notes in the left hand:

Example 17

The image displays three systems of musical notation for a blues scale exercise. Each system consists of a grand staff with a treble clef on the right and a bass clef on the left. The right hand plays a blues scale phrase, and the left hand plays simple root notes. The systems are labeled with chords: C7, F7, and C7. The first system shows the C7 chord in the first measure, F7 in the second, and C7 in the third. The second system shows F7 in the first measure and C7 in the second. The third system shows G7 in the first measure, F7 in the second, and C7 in the third. The right hand fingering is indicated by numbers 1-5 above the notes. A note in the second system has the annotation "(RIGHT HAND FINGERING SIMILAR)".

Check out the accompanying mp3 audio track and you can hear how this repeated four-measure blues scale phrase fits over the twelve-bar blues form. Within each four-measure phrase, most of the notes are within the first two measures. The last two measures of each phrase function as a “breathing space” before the next phrase starts - this is very typical of blues melody and solo phrasing. Also, note that the phrase does not begin on beat 1 of the measure, instead it starts on beat 2. This type of “delayed entry” is also common in blues phrasing.

The blues scale can be awkward to get under your fingers at first, so check out the right hand fingering shown above to help you position your hand correctly.

Now to drive things along a little more, let’s add our “root-5th, root-6th” left hand pattern from Example 4, below these right hand blues scale phrases:

Example 18

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano, each consisting of a right-hand staff (treble clef) and a left-hand staff (bass clef). The right-hand staves contain a blues solo melody, and the left-hand staves contain a rhythmic accompaniment pattern. The first system is labeled "LEFT HAND FINGERING SIMILE", the second "RIGHT HAND FINGERING SIMILE", and the third has no label. Chord symbols C7, F7, and G7 are placed above the right-hand staves.

This example is a good test of how much you are getting this left hand pattern on “auto-pilot”, so that you can focus on the blues solo/melody in the right hand. Again, practice this hands separately as needed, and play along with the band on the audio track when you’re ready!

Theory note: Although the dominant 7th chords are not fully “spelled out” in this example, the dominant harmony is implied by placing the blues scale tones over the left hand pattern, and therefore the dominant chord symbols (C7, F7, G7) are shown above the staff. Dominant 7th chords are the “default” changes used in the great majority of blues songs.

Section Nine - Improvising with the Relative Minor Blues Scale

We need to get into a little theory here to understand what is meant by the term “relative minor”. All major keys have a relative minor key which occurs on the sixth degree of the major key. For example, the sixth degree of a C major scale is the note A, and so we can say that A is the “relative minor” of C major. It turns out that the keys of C major and A minor share the same key signature (no sharps and no flats). For more information on these important theory topics, check out the Further Reading section at the end of this book.

In the last section we saw how to use the C blues scale over a blues progression in the key of C. Now we’ll see how to use the relative minor blues scale (i.e. the A blues scale) over the same progression. Just to recap, here the term “relative minor blues scale” means the blues scale built from the relative minor (a.k.a. the sixth degree) of the key, and we know that A is the sixth degree of a C major scale. First of all let’s have a look at the A blues scale:

Example 19



This scale has exactly the same internal intervals as the C blues scale (see text following Example 16) but now starting on A instead of C.

In the following blues solo/melody example, we’ve again built a four-measure right hand phrase (this time using the A blues scale), and repeated it three times over the twelve-bar blues progression in the key of C:

Example 20

The image displays three systems of musical notation for piano, each consisting of a four-measure phrase in 4/4 time. The first system features chords C7, F7, and C7. The right-hand melody includes fingerings: 1 2 3 4, 4 5, 4 5, 6 1 3, and 5 1. The second system features chords F7 and C7, with a '5' in the bass line and the instruction '(RIGHT HAND FINGERING SIMILAR)'. The third system features chords G7, F7, and C7. Each system shows a right-hand melody with specific fingerings and a left-hand accompaniment of whole notes.

Again most of the notes occur within the first two measures of each four-measure phrase, which as we have seen is typical of the blues. Use the right hand fingering shown, to help you position your hand correctly for these A blues scale phrases. (This example can all be played in the same “hand position”, *i.e.* without moving the right hand).

Now to change things up a little we’ll add our “Chicago-style” left hand pattern from Example 13, below these right hand blues scale phrases:

Example 21

The image displays three systems of piano accompaniment for a blues piece in F major. Each system consists of a right-hand melodic line and a left-hand bass line. The first system includes a left-hand fingering diagram: $\overset{1}{A} \overset{2}{B} \overset{3}{C} \overset{4}{D} \overset{5}{E} \overset{4}{D} \overset{3}{C} \overset{2}{B} \overset{1}{A}$. The second system includes a right-hand fingering diagram: $\overset{5}{A} \overset{4}{B} \overset{3}{C} \overset{2}{D} \overset{1}{E} \overset{2}{F} \overset{3}{G} \overset{4}{A}$. The third system includes a right-hand fingering diagram: $\overset{1}{A} \overset{2}{B} \overset{3}{C} \overset{4}{D} \overset{5}{E} \overset{4}{D} \overset{3}{C} \overset{2}{B} \overset{1}{A}$. Chords C7, F7, and G7 are indicated above the staves. The left-hand part features a consistent bass line pattern of eighth notes.

Again it's desirable to get this left hand pattern on "auto-pilot", in order to focus on the right hand part. When you're ready, have fun improvising your own tonic blues and relative minor blues solos, while playing along to the mp3 backing tracks!

Section Ten - Combining Blues Scales and Adding Drone Notes

Finally in this section we will develop some important new techniques:

- 1) In the preceding examples we restricted ourselves to playing just the C blues scale or A blues scale only, in the right hand. In practice the “tonic” and “relative minor” blues scales can be freely mixed at the player’s discretion.
- 2) It is often very stylistic for piano and organ players to add “drone notes” above right hand blues scale phrases. A drone is a note which is held or repeated, above another moving line or phrase. Favorite drone notes within the blues scale are the tonic (starting note) and the seventh - within C blues these would be the notes C and Bb, and within A blues these would be the notes A and G.
- 3) So far we have been using a swing-eighths rhythmic subdivision, which divides each beat in a two-thirds/one-third ratio. There is an implied eighth-note triplet within this rhythmic feel, and our next example will occasionally use all of the eighth-note triplets within the beat, for a busier melodic effect.

With these points in mind, let’s look at the next blues solo/melody example:

Example 22

Again we have used a simple left hand root note pattern below the right hand part. We can analyze the right hand phrases used, as follows:

In measures 1-2 the right hand phrase is derived from a C blues scale. Eighth-note triplets are used within beat 2 of measure 1, and within beat 1 of measure 2.

In measures 3-4 the same C blues scale phrase is repeated, but with some drone notes added: the C (tonic of the scale) on beats 2 and 3 of measure 3, and the Bb (7th of the scale) on beats 1 and 2 of measure 4.

In measures 5-6 the right hand phrase is derived from an A blues scale. The eighth-note triplet rhythms are similar to measures 1-4.

In measures 7-8 the same A blues scale phrase is repeated, but with some drone notes added: the A (tonic of the scale) on beats 2 and 3 of measure 7, and the G

(7th of the scale) on beats 1 and 2 of measure 8.

Measures 9-12 are a repeat of measures 1-4 (using the C blues scale).

Check out the right hand fingering shown for these new blues scale phrases. You'll see that the right hand pinky (5th finger) is always used to play the drone notes.

When you're comfortable playing this example with the simple left hand root-note part, it's time to add a suitable left hand pattern to "kick it up a notch":

Example 23

The musical score for Example 23 is presented in four systems, each consisting of a right-hand melody and a left-hand accompaniment in 4/4 time. The right-hand melody uses various blues scale phrases with specific fingering (1-5) indicated. The left-hand accompaniment features a simple root-note pattern in the first system, which is then replaced by more complex patterns in the subsequent systems. Chord changes are marked above the staff: C7, F7, C7, F7, G7, and C7. A note '11' is written above the first measure of the final system. Annotations include '(LEFT HAND FINGERING SIMILAR)' and '(RIGHT HAND FINGERING SIMILAR)'.

This is a cool solo piece to “rock out” on - keep the left hand pattern nice and steady, and really project the right hand solo phrases and drones. Have fun!

Further Reading

I hope you have enjoyed this Blues Piano For Beginners book. I have numerous music education books out on the market, including some which further develop the concepts used in this book:

For more information on major and minor scales, relative major and minor keys, key signatures, intervals, triads, four-part chords, and modes, please refer to my Contemporary Music Theory Level One book.

For more information and piano exercises on triad inversions and voice leading, please refer to my Pop Piano Book and Piano Fitness book/CD.

For more information on blues piano styles, please refer to my Blues Piano book/CD and Jazz-Blues Piano book/CD.

Please visit us at www.harrisonmusic.com for information on these books, and on all of our music education products and services.

Musically,

Mark Harrison



BLUES PIANO **FOR BEGINNERS**

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